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DE RUEHAE #0801 2841305
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R 111305Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9159
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 6129
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 2981
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1467
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1644
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

S E C R E T ASMARA 000801

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DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, AF/E, AF/EX, INR
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2027
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: INFORMATION FROM MILITARY DESERTER ON GSE MILITARY
BRIEFINGS TO TROOPS

Classified By: RSO SEAN MCCLANAHAN FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (S/NF) An Embassy employee provided RSO with information from a friend who had just deserted from the Eritrean military. Employee stated his friend had been assigned to an armored or mechanized unit near the town of Senafe, located approximately 100 km SE of Asmara. The soldier told employee his unit had been assembled and briefed by an officer on 10/01/2007. The officer said war was imminent and that he felt the unit was mentally and physically prepared for conflict with Ethiopia. The officer acknowledged that the soldiers had been underpaid and underfed for a long time. He also stated he understood their national service had been extended longer than the GSE had promised, but due to the security situation, they could not be demobilized. Many soldiers in the audience told the officer "they knew how they would react," implying if conflict erupted, they would either desert, surrender or not fight against the Ethiopians. The officer responded that if they did not fight against the Ethiopians, the Ethiopians would invade Asmara and rape all of their female relatives.

12. (S/NF) Employee stated his friend deserted on 10/03/07 and arrived in Asmara on 10/07/07 where he is currently living with his family. The soldier told employee that there have been mass defections within the Eritrean military, and soldiers are fleeing to Ethiopia on a daily basis. Employee stated he has seen many "deserted" soldiers in Asmara over the last few weeks. He also relayed a rumor the GSE plans to conduct house-to-house searches looking for deserters.
MCINTYRE